THE FACTORY LASSES

SKETCHES OF THEIR LIVES IN THE GREAT LANCASHIRE MILLS.

Provisions Made by the Oxford Factory Owners for the Recreation of Their Employees—How the Girls Dress and Conduct Themselves.

For the recreation of their hands mills have no provision whatever—as a rule, that is. There are a few exceptions, and only a few. Unique certainly are the Oxford mills at Ashton-under-Lyne, in connection with which the late Mr. Hugh Mason founded a little colony. For outdoor sports there is a large play ground, with swings, etc., and a bowling green attached. When the weather is unfavorable the hands can go to the recreation rooms. On the ground floor of these is a reading room liberally supplied with newspapers and periodicals, and having a library of 700 volumes.

A coffee room leads off it, and from that again the baths are reached. Up stairs is a large lecture room fitted with desks and with a platform at the end. Busts of great men are on pedestals round the walls. Scott and Burns are in a niche together, as is fitting, and near them are Homer, Shakespeare, Dante and Milton. Michael Angelo looks at Raphael, Bright and Cobden, Newton and Watt, Franklin and Washington—all are there; and at intervals there are also hung portraits of inventors and improvers of cotton machinery. In connection with these rooms there is a good brass band. Sewing and other classes, too, are held, while during the winter months concerts and lectures are of frequent occurrence. Of all this it should be noted Messrs. Thomas Mason & Son defray the expenses.

From other portions of the district we take the following. The secretary of a cotton operative spinners' association is stated to have said:

"Any girl who wants work can have it in the mills. That labor market is never overstocked. At the present time, particularly in the spinning department, some firms are shorthanded. Nowadays many girls in Manchester do not care to go into the mills; they would rather work in the warehouses and shops."

"There has been an improvement in the lot of the factory workers?" asked the interviewer.

"Yes," replied the secretary, "in every way; wages are higher, hours shorter. But, mind you, hands have to work harder while they are at it, because the machinery runs faster and they have to look after more of it. Why, in my young days a weaver tended only two looms, now she tends four."

Throstle spinners, the writer adds, work with as little clothing as possible and generally in their bare feet, though some wear slippers. Cardroom hands wear straight pinafores, cut away at the neck and with short sleeves. The distinctive parts of the mill girl's dress are clogs on the feet and a small shawl—"handkerchief," they are called—on the shoulders.

Weavers, though there is nothing peculiar about their dress, can generally be distinguished from other factory girls. They have a personal trade mark—their front teeth are often bad, and besides many of them have at times a peculiar gesture. Drawing in the breath to suck weft through a shuttle causes the teeth to decay. The mannerism is similarly explained.

In a weaving shed the noise is deafening. You cannot hear your own voice. So the weavers attract one another's attention by a shrill "Whoo!" and converse by means of signs and by watching the movements of the lips. They are so proficient in labiomancy that they can follow a private conversation anywhere if they can see the speakers' faces. This circumstance explains a common observation that is otherwise enigmatical. "Mind what tha'rt sayin'" one gossip will remark to another, glancing suspiciously at the object of their talk. "'oo's a wayver."

Some mill girls never do any housework; their ignorance in which branch of female education is consequently colossal. Hundreds cannot make a pudding or a pie for the life of them, and the writer has heard of a lass putting a rabbit in a dish whole and making a crust for it with suet. There are factory girls on the other hand—and these are in the majority—who take their full share of cleaning, cookery, needlework, etc.

As a rule, too, the lasses are in every way respectable. When a factory lass and her sweetheart go off on a trip or take a week at Blackpool or Southport or the Isle of Man, as often as not she pays the expenses. She it is who in due course buys the furniture—aye, and perhaps the ring and all the rest. Whether she will stand treat in this or not, the four loom weaver need never remain single. Among factory girls she corresponds to the heiress of ordinary life, and as such has no difficulty in obtaining a husband.

When offsprings become old enough they are sent to the mill, as their parents were before them. The typical Lancashire woman does not like the idea of their aiming higher. As they soon receive good wages their parents are rapidly placed in comfortable circumstances—more comfortable than they ever knew perhaps. This state is the factory operatives' summum bonum—the position beyond which he or she very rarely goes.—Cassell's Journal.

To Play Musical Whist.

In these days when it is the fashion to understand and study whist, it is interesting to know that as a novelty for a bazar the game has been introduced as "Musical whist with living cards." Four players are seated upon raised seats; a large, square cloth on the floor or on a platform or stage forms the card table. The cards are represented by persons in appropriate costumes, and the gowns for the court cards may be very original. The clubs usually wear gray and white, the emblems being in black velvet, and have crowns of silver gray and jet. Hearts wear a pretty shade of green, with white, and the emblems are in red. Spades are in pink with black velvet emblems; diamonds in yellow, with deep red. The parts of the smaller cards may be taken by children in gowns of cream white and mob caps, the cards being indicated in large characters on the front of their dresses, or they may carry an immense card, two feet in length and hung over the shoulders, hanging in shield fashion in front, on which are the spots of the card, and a card should hang at the back also and display the ordinary kind of a card back.

The cards enter to the music of a march, and are preceded by two little pages clad in slashed satin suits, capes with ostrich tips, and carrying wands of silver. Shuffling, cutting and dealing are shown by a dance, and the cards then arrange themselves in front of their respective players. Each player indicates in turn the card to advance to the center, with musical accompaniment. The winning card of each trick leads the others to one corner of the square, where they form in file, and so on, closing up when six tricks are made on either side. At the conclusion of the game the tricks of the winning side lead off in triumph those of the losing side.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Hardships of Paris Shopgirls.

The shopgirls of Paris called a meeting at the Bourse du Travail. Its object was to protest against the refusal of the chamber of deputies to extend to them the law for the regulation of the conditions of work in workshops. The refusal was disguised under the form of an adjournment on the score that their grievances were not yet ripe for discussion.

The situation of shopgirls in Paris is one of great hardship; their pay is not handsome; they are obliged to dress well, and they have to be in the shop from thirteen to fourteen hours, meal times included. One of the hardships of which they complain is being forced to stand for so many hours. The air is generally exhausted, as customers fear drafts. Workgirls, if skilled, are much better off than shopgirls.

It appears from statistics produced at the congres feministe by Mme. Vincent that out of the 10,352,000 artisans of France there are 4,415,000 women who receive in wages or dividends no less than £98,400,000. There are in Paris 8,000 women doing business on an independent footing, and out of 3,858 suits that the council of prudhommes judged last year 1,674 concerned workwomen.—Cor. London News.

Mr. Howells' Sister.

Few persons know that W. D. Howells has a sister, but he has, and she is by no means a nonentity, as the following anecdote shows:

Mrs. Achille Frechette, sister of William D. Howells, the author, once wrote a clever little skit as a sequel to her brother's "Chance Acquaintance," in which it will be remembered that the elegant Boston hero, Arbuton, is cast off by the western girl whom he had met and loved, because he leaves her alone under the strong influence of a grand dame from the Back Bay, who turns up unexpectedly and freezes his better nature back into local snobbishness. Mrs. Frechette made the hero, after a marriage of convenience with a properly dowered Boston girl, meet his old flame at the top of Bunker Hill monument. He chases her down the stairs—there is a long pursuit and a double suicide from the Bridge of Sighs, in the Public garden. Mrs. Frechette's brother did not relish the suggested satire on his own work, and the little piece was never printed, but destroyed after some private readings.—San Francisco Argonaut.

Miss Terry in Private Life.

Miss Ellen Terry is the sister-in-law of Rev. H. W. Wardell, vicar of St. Giles' church, Colchester. A few days ago a bazaar was held at Colchester, the object being to procure funds to restore the church. The bazaar was held at Holly Trees, the beautiful residence of Mr. James Rounds, member of parliament for the Harwich division of Essex, and was opened by Lady Brook. Miss Terry was in attendance, and her presence drew to the bazaar an immense crowd. The affair was most successful, both socially and financially, and the money raised will go far toward putting old St. Giles' into good repair again. At present Miss Terry is staying at Winchelsea, in the cottage she bought from Mr. Comyn Carr. She is living with her son, who is known on the stage as Gordon Craig, and her daughter, who under the name of Ailsa Craig has several times appeared in amateur theatricals.—London Letter.

Recognized Ability.

As an instance of the growing appreciation of woman's work in artistic designing, it may be noted that Miss Charlotte Robinson, home art decorator to the queen, was lately summoned to Scotland by the directors of the Cunard Steamship company to give her valuable ideas as to the furnishing and decoration of the company's new boats.

In this acknowledgment of Miss Robinson's talents, the Cunard line only followed the example of the directors of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincoln railway, who lately commissioned the same well known lady decorator to undertake the complete decoration and furnishing of one of their palatial hotels at Grimsby.—London Tit-Bits.

Takes the Leading Part.

"They tell me you are the leading member of the college football team. What position do you fill?"

"I put on the bandages."—Chicago News-Record.

An Invitation.

A Market street soft drink cafe displays a sign reading, "Try one of our Columbus egg phosphates and you will discover another world."—Philadelphia Record.